

TRIPURA-RAHASYA (JNANAKHANDA)

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

by

A. U. VASAVADA M.A., D.Litt,

Chowkhamba Sanskrit series office, Varanasi 1989

CHAPTER XX

THE INCARNATION OF THE GODDESS

Śrī Dattātreyā further continued: “Paraśurāma! I have replied to your questions, let me now relate to you a story of former times. Long ago, once in the court of God Brahmā, in the world of Truth there came up a very subtle discussion regarding wisdom or knowledge. In the assembly of the learned in the court, there were many realized persons, princes and saints like Bhṛgu, Aṅgira, Praceta, Nārada, Cyavana, Vāmadeva, Viśvāmitra, Gautama, Śuka, Parāśara, Kaṇva, Kaśyapa, Dakṣa, Sumanta, Śaṅkha, Likhita and Devala. They raised a very subtle point and went into a big discussion and argument and put the question before God Brahmā: “O Great One! All of us assembled here are knowers of the transcendental truth, but all of us behave quite differently due to different characters. Many of us remain in trance, many get immersed in argumentation while others continue to live actively or are absorbed in love and devotion, and some begin to live like ordinary men of the world. Will you please tell us who among us is the highest and the best. Each one believes that his own way of life is the best.”

Having heard the question, God Brahmā felt that the questioners did not have sufficient faith in him and so, avoiding the reply, said: “O Saints! I too do not know it correctly. I feel God Mahādeva seems to know it well. Let us all go to him and ask him.”

So they all went to Mahādeva, the God of all the gods. Lord Viṣṇu also happened to be there at that time. God Brahmā put the question of the saints before him. He, having read the mind of Lord Brahmā, felt the same about their lack of faith and thought it best not to give a direct reply. He thought that they would not understand it and consider it to be, one among other opinions, and all he would say would be in vain. They would not profit by the reply. Thinking this, he said: “O Sages! I do not really know it so well. Let me therefore meditate upon the Goddess of Knowledge,

Vidyādevī. May-be I will be able to expound on the subtlety of it better through her grace.”

Having so heard Śrī Mahādeva, all the Sages along with Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva began to meditate on the Goddess of Knowledge, the very embodiment of consciousness. When all were absorbed in meditation, there came a big sound of rolling thunder from the heavens and the Goddess manifested herself in the form of words: “Sages! Why have you meditated on me? Please tell me your heart's desire. No-one has returned unfulfilled by me.” All the Saints saluted the Goddess respectfully, hearing the heavenly words. Everyone present propitiated her in various ways through their prayers and started the question after all the preliminaries were over: “O Goddess of Knowledge, may Thou, the Goddess of the three cities, accept our salutation. Thou art the creator, sustainer and dissolver of all. Salutation to Thee! Being unborn, Thou art the most ancient and being without age (ageless), Thou art ever new. Thou art everything too. Thou art omniscient and all-blissful. So also art Thou the absence of all, the great void, being nowhere, without any qualities, not knowing anything and devoid of all the joys. O Goddess! We salute Thee for ever and ever. On Your right, on Your left, above and below and on all sides, our salutation to Thee. O Goddess! Please be kind enough to tell us which is your transcendent and which is your non-transcendent aspect? So also your glory, knowledge, its fruits and the means to attain it. Please also tell us who is the right seeker and what is the highest stage of search and who among the realized is the highest. O Goddess! The All! Please tell us all one by one, Once again our salutation to Thee.”

After these questions, the Goddess felt compassionate towards them all and began her deep and profound speech: “O Sages! I shall reply to your questions one by one. Let me give you the very cream after churning the very ocean of the Vedas or knowledge.”

(1) “My transcendent form is evident to all, it being that which makes the world appear reflected as in a mirror, and that which sustains and dissolves the world. Those who do not know the self, find me in the form of the world. My true form is that which the Yogis realize in their pure awareness as absolute peace, tranquility and fathomlessness of the ocean. The one-pointed devotees worship it eternally out of pure love and devotion, without expectation of any reward. It is that which creates the duality of God and the devotee through mind in spite of its non-dual nature. It is the inner controller of the senses, mind and intellect and also the void when not so related to them. It is also the same as is known through scriptures. This is my highest, the transcendent form.

(2) In the island of jewels, encircled by the ocean of nectar, beyond the universe, there is a temple made of *cintāmaṇi* (wish-giving jewel) in the grove of *Kadamba* trees. There is a platform with four legs representing Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśa and the God (Īśvara), and the platform itself represents the back of Sadāśiva. On it, is installed my non-transcendent form as Tripurā in the form of eternal connunctio. Moreover, Sadāśiva, Īśana, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, God Śiva, Gaṇeśa, the God with six faces, Indra, Guardians with eight directions, the Goddess Lakṣmi and other Śaktis, Vasu, Rudra, Gaṇa, Titans, Gods, Serpents and Yakṣas and other such gods worth-worshipping are none but my own manifest form. Thus, I being all-pervasive and everywhere, people do not recognize me being deluded by my own Māyā. Despite this, they all worship me and I fulfill their desires. There is none more fulfilling and venerable than myself. Whosoever worships me in whatever form and manner, I fulfill him accordingly,

(3) My glory is unlimited. Without resorting to any external help, being solitary and consciousness in essence, I appear in the form of infinite world, but in spite of this, I do not swerve from my true nature. To perform such a miracle is my glory. O Sages! Let me further tell you about it. Please listen to it with your best insight. I am the resort of all and the inner controller and also at the same time all alone, absolute. I am ever eternally free, yet strive for liberation again and again. I go to Sadguru, accepting the role of a disciple and realize the self. But again forgetting the self-essence, I remain involved in this world for a long time and I also create this vast universe without resorting to any means. This is how my glory is manifold. Even the thousand mouths cannot speak adequately of it. In the end, let me tell you briefly that this world is a manifestation of only a part of my glory.

4) The knowledge which brings my realization is also varied such as non-dual, dual, etc. So the fruits of this knowledge are also varied more or less accordingly. Even the knowledge of duality is of many kinds, being dependent upon the different forms worshipped. This is known as meditation or worship. But all this is experienced momentary, like in a dream or a reverie. And that also is a sort of fruition, a result of devotion. That is how the plan of destiny runs. Of all the meditations just mentioned, the best form of worship is the meditation on my transcendental form, since it brings liberation in proper sequence. Knowledge of non-dual reality is really knowledge proper. How can one attain Myself as Great Knowledge - Mahāvidyā - without propitiating me as the Goddess Śrī Vidyā? Highest consciousness is the knowledge of the Non-dual; that alone removes the consciousness of duality. It is realized when the mind is turned towards the self. That alone is the knowledge which is achieved through reading of scriptures and right thinking and brings the realization of the self, destroying completely the sense of body-consciousness i.e. I am the body. Nothing

remains to be known after this, and all the world appearances fade then. True knowledge of the non-dual is that which makes one realize everything as the self. It scares away all doubts like clouds before the wind. After this, trifling desires and cravings for things find no place. They become as useless and ineffective as a snake without its poisonous teeth. O Sages! This is the highest wisdom and knowledge of myself.

(5) The result (fruit) of knowledge is the dissolution of all miseries and the attainment of fearlessness. The consciousness of the other is the cause of all fear. It soon disappears as the knowledge of non-dual is established. One does not even see a trace of darkness at dawn. Hence, O Sages! There is no fear after the thought of duality is dissolved. Everything else but the self is transitory and has an end. All expectations and hopes of gain from the side of the world will be impermanent and causing fear. How can one become fearless as long as one depends on transitory things? There is separation at the end of every union. It is so certain. Hence, all such things are full of fear. Self-essence is alone eternal and its realization is fearlessness. It is true liberation. Perfect knowledge is that state of mind in which there is complete absence of darkness (Tamas) and no stir of thought activity. It is not easy to recognize it at first. Guru and the scriptures teach one to recognize it. It is the subject of the highest knowledge. It is not realized so long as one distinguishes between the knower, the known and knowing. When the distinction of all the triads is dissolved, one realizes that the knower is the same as the known and knowing. This is the fruit of knowledge. In truth, distinction cannot be made between the knower, the known and knowing and its fruits. Distinctions have been maintained just for the sake of convenience. As such, there is nothing new to be gained by realization. So long as the self appears as the knower, the known and knowing and its fruits through its māyā, the world stands, before us as resistant as a mountain. But if one realizes the differenceless self-essence, even accidentally, the world appearance disappears like sand-dunes before a storm.

(6) The chief means for such liberation is the earnestness of the seeker. If one is sincerely earnest and ready, no other disciplines are necessary at all. If it is not present in one, nothing can bring it about. Hence, earnestness is the means and chief discipline. "I will do this whatever happens" - this is earnestness. One who has arrived at this stage, he is already liberated. "I must be liberated, time does not matter, it may be days, months or years or life hereafter". A person as earnest as this is already on the way to it. Time required to attain it, depends upon the purity of his mind and his intelligence. That is all there is to it. The defects of intelligence are many and are the obstacles in the endeavor. It is due to this that many burn in the fire of this world. Lack of faith, cravings and idleness are the three main defects. Lack of

faith is again of two kinds, viz. doubting and wrong thinking. They are the chief obstacles in earnestness. A good determination is destroyed due to the above defect. One should try to cut the very root of such things. The root cause of lack of faith is to think in opposition to what the scriptures have said. One should give this up and begin to think against wrong thinking in order to cultivate right thinking. This leads to faith destroying uncertainty and insincerity. When the mind is filled with cravings and desires, there cannot be right listening. Such a mind does not turn towards right knowledge. It is often seen that one who is absorbed in something interesting does not see or hear other things. Such a person has really listened to nothing in spite of hearing. One should, therefore, control his cravings for objects through detachment. Desire, anger, concupiscence, etc. are so many obstacles. Cravings and desires are the roots of them all. When this is gone, others do not remain, and this craving disappears only through the cultivation of the attitude of detachment. "I would like to have this or that", this is craving. It has become strong and dense in relation to things already possessed and subtle relation to those not yet possessed. Intense detachment alone is necessary to get rid of it. If one goes to the root of the attitude of detachment, one shall find that it is the discernment of imperfection in things desired and the severance of contact with such things. The cravings disappear in this manner. The third defect of intelligence or mind is idleness. It is difficult to overcome it, even by efforts. If a man has this defect, listening even becomes useless for him even though he may try earnestly. This is one of the biggest handicaps for the realization of the self. There is no other way open for him except devotion to God. I remove his idleness according to his devotion. He gets his reward in this or a later life. O Sages! Understand that it is through my grace that man acquires all the means for attainment. One who worships me selflessly and with true devotion is fulfilled soon, all his obstacles having been removed. But one who does not worship me cannot remove his denseness of intellect in spite of practicing all other disciplines. Nay, he goes through all ups and downs. May-be, he does not reach up to the goal even. So, let it be very clear to you all that earnestness is the chief means in this direction.

(7) One who is so earnest is really the true seeker. He naturally is more devoted to me.

(8) I am neither the body nor the soul. Such a conviction is perfection. When the mind is purified and gets clear by the withdrawal of selfhood projected on Gods and objects of the world, it means one has got the realization. Everyone knows that he is the self. No one doubts it. Still, one recognizes himself as a body and not as the absolute. This is the greatest evil and has been there since long. True realization of knowledge means the clarification of all doubts by the conviction that consciousness which illumines the body and others is the self. This is the perfection of knowledge.

All other occult powers such as magnification and flying in the air, etc. are not equal to one sixteenth part of this perfection. All these occult powers have the limitations of the space-and-time system. It means that these powers can be manifested only in a definite time and place. But the perfection of self-realization is all propitious and limitless. One acquires the above-mentioned insignificant occult powers on the path to self-knowledge, but they are all hindrances to it. What good can come out of powers which are like the tricks of a magician? They should not be called perfection. They are just child's play. Hence, there is no other perfection in truth except self-realization. That is really to be called perfection which destroys the miseries forever and fills one with intense joy and bliss and frees him from the jaws of death. What more is there to say about it? Now, this perfection differs according to difference in discipline, more or less of intelligence and difference in maturity of wisdom. One can discern three grades. The best, the middle and the lowest grade. It is just like the recitation of the Vedas by a Brāhmin. That recitation is best which is unbroken even though one may be engaged in other activities. This is possible because one has learned it well and continued its practice. The recitation which needs effort of attention to perform it correctly while one is engaged in another activity at the same time, is of the middle grade. The lowest one needs one's whole attention to the recitation itself, other things have to be left aside in order to do it correctly. Likewise, the perfection in knowledge is threefold.

(a) That is the best wherein one remains self-aware effortlessly and spontaneously in spite of doing all the activities of daily life.

(b) The one who has to make an effort in this direction is the middle grade.

(c) The third or the lowest needs his whole attention to the self-awareness which creates obstacles in the routine life.

In spite of all this, in essence, there is no difference here. The highest perfection is the epitome of perfection. That perfection of knowledge is the highest wherein one remains self-aware even in dreams and is able to know every thought as soon as it arises. One should understand that he has arrived at the highest perfection when he remains spontaneously related to things without prethought, as if events were automatically adjusted. When one begins to remain self-aware without break and effort, one should understand himself to have reached the limit. Perfection should be considered to have reached the highest again when one does not see duality and difference in spite of contact with objects in doing his daily routine. When one's mind and heart remain calm and tranquil as if in deep sleep even when one is engaged in the activities of life, he has reached the acme to perfection.

(9) One who has attained to such a stage is really the Perfect. He is the best whose trance remains undisturbed even while doing the daily round of duties. He is the Highest who begins to understand and discern the different stages of experiences in other men of realization on the basis of his own self-awareness and realization. One who has neither doubts nor cravings and desires is the Highest. He acts fearlessly in the world and understands all the joys and sorrows and the varied play of the world as enacted on him and by him. He understands himself to be in bondage and is also liberated. He does not even care to be liberated from the cobweb of bondage, imprisoning him like others, since it does not affect him because he has transcended it. What more should I tell you? Understand and realize that the Highest is none but me. There is no difference between me and my devotees. This is how I have answered your questions as clearly as possible. I am sure no-one will get deluded again if he listened to it correctly.

Having said this, Goddess Vidyādevī ended her speech. All the Sages abandoned their doubts and accepted the worship of the Goddess. They returned to their respective homes, having paid respects to Śiva and the guardians of all directions.”

“Paraśurāma! Thus I have told you the Song of the Goddess Vidyā. Whosoever hears this, will have his accumulated sins destroyed. If one correctly thinks upon it, it rewards him with the kingdom of the bliss of the self. Since these are the very words of the Goddess Vidyā herself, they are of immense value. One who repeats this, has the favor (grace) of the Goddess. She bestows the knowledge of self. O Paraśurāma! This is the most secure vessel for one who is being drowned in the sea of the world.”